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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 2364
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 9386
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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 2693
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9947
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0087
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000079

SIPDIS

SCA/INSB for Anthony Renzulli
INL for John Lyle

E.O 12958: N/A

TAGS: SNAR MV

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT FOR
2009/2010, MALDIVES

REF: STATE 97228

¶1. Per reftel, below is the 2009/10 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report for Maldives.

SUMMARY

¶2. The Government of the Maldives (GOM) estimates that as much as ten percent of its population of 350,000 uses illicit drugs regularly. The GOM is committed to targeting drugs traffickers and implementing nation-wide demand reduction programs. It is working with international donors to tackle the nation's drug problem.

STATUS OF COUNTRY

¶3. The Maldives is not a producer of narcotics or precursor chemicals; however the drug problem is quite dramatic. Some GOM officials estimate that as much as ten percent of the population is addicted to or abuses drugs. Drug use has been noted in all regions of the Maldives. While the previous government generally ignored the growing drug problem, the current government - elected in late 2008 - has made tackling the issue a major policy initiative. Despite the fact that the country is located near major illicit opium producing countries in Asia, it is not known to serve as a major transshipment route. Narcotics are generally smuggled via small craft into the country from South India for domestic use.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

¶4. The lead agency for counternarcotics efforts is the Drug Enforcement Department - part of the Maldives Police - headquartered in the capital city of Male'. In 2009, the Drug Enforcement Department arrested two of the large scale drug dealers (out of the six known major dealers) and carried on over 200 drug sting operations across many of the Atolls. The Customs Department works closely with the police on interdiction cases, with officials stationed at the ports. Customs also uses a small number of speed boats to monitor the country's massive coastline.

¶5. The Maldivian Police continue to work closely with the Customs Service to curtail illicit drug supplies and use in the country. In 2009, Maldivian Officials arrested 2363 persons for possession of narcotics. In part due to the GOM's stepped-up efforts (including UN-funded public information campaigns), Maldivian Police have stated that the number of new drug users went down by 43% compared

to previous years. In 2009, Customs and the Police seized a total of 12.56 kg valued at Maldivian Rufiyaa 11 million (U.S. dollars 830,000) of heroin, cannabis, benzodiazepine, ketamine and small amounts of cocaine.

¶6. In December, the Maldivian Customs intercepted over 5 kg of ketamine (and small amounts of cocaine) at the Male' International Airport. An Indian national, with an onward flight bound for Indonesia, was arrested on the spot. Another flight from India earlier in 2009 was found to contain 1.04kg of cannabis and 0.7 kg of heroine in a vegetable consignment bound for Male'.

ADDITIONAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS

¶7. The present Maldivian Government established a Narcotics Control Council within the President's Office and has submitted legislation to the Parliament to curb drug use and trafficking. The Health Ministry is tasked with treatment and prevention programs and the Ministry of Education is currently developing - with the assistance of the United Nations and the Colombo Plan - an in-school anti-narcotics curriculum. The Maldives also continues to work with the Colombo Plan's Drug Advisory Program, as well as with the United Nations, the European Union, and the USG to combat drug use in the country. A rehabilitation program has been in existence since 1977, however the country has limited after-care treatment programs.

U.S. POLICY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

¶8. The USG remained committed to helping GOM officials develop increased capacity and cooperation for counternarcotics issues. The USG also continued its support of a regional counternarcotics

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program, including through the Colombo Plan, which conducts regional and country-specific training seminars, fostering communication and cooperation throughout Asia. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration attach based in New Delhi visited Male' in November 2009 to coordinate anti-drug trafficking activities with the local police and Customs.